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# *The* BRITISH ART *Journal*

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COVER

*Landscape with a pool*

by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–88), c1746–7.

Oil on canvas, 34.9 x 29.8 cm. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.  
 In the exhibition 'Thomas Gainsborough: Die moderne Landschaft',  
 Hamburg Kunsthalle, 2 March–27 May 2018 (see Exhibition reviews)

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# Role playing in *The Family of Sir Thomas More* by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8–1543)

Catherine Hunt



Holbein's portrait *The Family of Sir Thomas More* (Pl 1) has been described as 'a pioneering work – the first conversation piece ever created in German art'.<sup>1</sup> Others refer to the portrait's naturalism as providing 'a fairly direct mirror of everyday life in the More household'.<sup>2</sup> On one level these assessments are undoubtedly true; Thomas More and his family are gathered together at home and, if we take into account the annotations to the drawing, surrounded by objects that reflect the interests of the family members: books, musical instruments and a pet monkey. Alternatively, David Smith proposed that the drawing (and the painting for which it was a preliminary sketch) should be understood not only as a naturalistic family portrait, but also as an exploration of irony and humour, embedded within humanist thinking.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, I will focus on the metaphor of life as a play, which is used repeatedly in the writings of More and Erasmus, and which is discussed extensively in subsequent scholarship. More's conception of public life as a performance is a key theme in Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, where he explores More's awareness both of the fictional nature of political life, and the ways in which participants in the 'drama' watch themselves performing.<sup>4</sup> I will argue that these ideas, discussed by Greenblatt and others in the context of More's life and work more generally, provide a particularly useful framework for interpreting Holbein's family portrait. I suggest that the portrait articulates More's ideas concerning

role-playing in public life, both in terms of its artificiality, but also in terms of the more philosophical question of whether an individual's role in life is predetermined – controlled by fate, as it were. More specifically, I will extend these ideas to suggest an alternative reading of two elements of the portrait that often tend to be given a literal interpretation: the gesture of Elizabeth Dauncey, depicted on the far left of the drawing, in which she pulls off her glove (Pl 2); and the monkey on the far right next to Dame Alice, Thomas More's wife. It is entirely appropriate to interpret these and other elements both in a literal or naturalistic way and as an allusion to something else. This would be in keeping with the early modern humanist outlook, and in particular with the way paradox was employed as a rhetorical device in humanist circles. Mark Roskill refers to this use of paradox in terms of 'creative transformations and witty invention', explaining that:

Its components have a polysemic status, whereby an object, or congeries of elements, can represent or 'mean' more than one thing at the same time. The paradox exercises appeal on the viewer accordingly, on the basis of what appears, interactively between the components and intriguingly, as built-in contradiction.<sup>5</sup>

Roskill argues that these devices are inherent in Holbein's work, and I would concur that this is precisely the way that *The Family of Sir Thomas More* might be interpreted. The play of different elements and the opportunity to tease out allusions and connections would have provided a stimulating and





**1** *The Family of Sir Thomas More* by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8–1543), 1527. Pen and brush, black and brown ink over chalk on paper, 38.9 x 52.4 cm. Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett. Photo: Martin P. Bühler

**2** Detail of drawing in Pl 1

**3** *Elizabeth Dauncey* by Hans Holbein, c1526–27. Black and coloured chalks, 36.7 x 26 cm. Royal Library, Windsor Castle. Royal Collection Trust/Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2016



pleasurable exercise for early modern viewers, in particular those from More's intimate circle. Additionally this approach provides a way of reassessing Elizabeth Dauncey's glove gesture and the presence of the monkey, and considering how they contribute to the overall themes of the portrait.

First, though, a brief introduction to the drawing, and the painted copies produced by Rowland Locket; in 1527, Holbein, who was staying at Thomas More's home, was commissioned to produce a painted family portrait. This drawing and a number of portrait sketches survive, including that of Elizabeth Dauncey (Pl 3), but the painted version was destroyed in a fire in 1752.<sup>6</sup> Although Holbein's painting is lost, several painted copies of it survive, produced by Rowland Locket for the descendants of Thomas More: the best known include a miniature in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and two life-size versions, one in the National Portrait Gallery and the other in Nostell Priory (Pl 4).<sup>7</sup> It is generally accepted that the Nostell Priory version, produced in 1592, is a relatively faithful copy of Holbein's original, on the basis that Holbein's annotations on the drawing, which probably indicate changes requested by More himself, are incorporated and, unlike the other versions, later descendants have not been included.<sup>8</sup> For this reason I will focus my discussion here on Holbein's drawing and the Nostell Priory version by Locket.

In the drawing we can see, from left to right: Elizabeth Dauncey, Thomas More's second daughter; Margaret Giggs, his ward; Sir John More, Thomas More's father; Anne Cresacre, his ward; Sir Thomas More; John More, his son; Henry Patenson, Thomas More's 'fool'; Cecily Heron, his youngest daughter; Margaret Roper, his eldest daughter; and Dame Alice More, Thomas More's second wife. In the Nostell Priory version, More's secretary, John Harris, has been added, appearing in the doorway, and the positions of Elizabeth Dauncey and Margaret Giggs have been changed. In the drawing, Elizabeth is placed on the far left, with Margaret leaning forward to show

Sir John More a passage in her book, whereas in the painted copy, the two are reversed. It is unclear whether this was a change proposed by Thomas More himself, or whether it was one requested by the next generation of the More family when Locket's copy was completed.<sup>9</sup>

After Holbein's painting had been completed this drawing was given as a present by More to his friend Erasmus, delivered in person by Holbein in 1528 on his return to Basel.<sup>10</sup> The exchange of portraits between friends was well established in early modern Europe and, some 10 years earlier, More had received a pair of portraits, painted by Quinten Metsys, depicting Erasmus and Pieter Gillis.<sup>11</sup> These included references to their friendship, and so as to evoke More himself as part of this group of three friends Gillis was depicted holding a letter he had been sent by More.<sup>12</sup> Similar allusions can be found in their writings, most explicitly *Praise of Folly*, which was written by Erasmus in 1508. Its dedication to More was reflected in its title, *Moriae Encomium*, meaning both 'Praise of Folly' and 'Praise of More', and it makes a number of references to the collaboration of Erasmus and More several years earlier in translating Lucian.<sup>13</sup> Holbein was involved in producing some marginal illustrations for *Praise of Folly* in 1515, and it is these kinds of interactions that lead Smith to remark of the relationship of Holbein, Erasmus and More, 'It seems inescapable that the Family Portrait grew out of an active and highly creative collaboration, in which each man left his unmistakable imprint on the work.'<sup>14</sup>

One important element of this creative collaboration seems to have been a shared interest in the theatre, in both a literal and a metaphorical sense. Holbein, in his service to the Tudor court, had designed a theatre in 1527 that formed part of the celebrations following the peace treaty between Henry VIII and France,<sup>15</sup> and a few years later he designed elements of the pageantry to mark the coronation of Anne Boleyn. In early modern Europe, pageantry, art, and drama were seen as more closely related than they are today, and court artists were often





engaged with the production of ephemeral entertainments, as well as more lasting works of art. More had also had some informal involvement in dramatic productions. William Roper, More's biographer and son-in-law, recounts a story from More's early years:

Though he [More] was young of years, yet would he at Christmastide suddenly sometimes step in among the players, and never studying for the matter, make a part of his own there presently among them, which made the lookers-on more sport than all the players beside.<sup>16</sup>

It is also worth remembering that More's brother-in-law was John Rastell, well-known as a 'deviser of pageants and ... producer of plays',<sup>17</sup> and his niece was married to John Heywood, Groom of the Chamber in the court of Henry VIII, and sometime dramatist.<sup>18</sup>

It is, however, the metaphorical concept of the theatre that throws most light, I believe, on *The Family of Sir Thomas More*. The idea of the world as a stage, with men and women as players, famously taken up later by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*, was powerfully articulated by the Greek writer Lucian in his dialogue *Menippus*, which was translated by More and Erasmus in 1505–6:

As I looked at them it seemed to me that human life is like a long pageant, and that all its trappings are supplied and distributed by Fortune, who arrays the participants in various costumes of many colours... often, in the very middle of the pageant, she exchanges the costumes of several players; instead of allowing them to finish the pageant in the parts that had been assigned to them, she re-apparels them... For a brief space she lets them use their costumes, but when the time of the pageant is over, each gives back the properties and lays off the costume along with his body, becoming what he was before his birth, no different from his neighbour.<sup>19</sup>

A few years later, Erasmus took up this theme in his own writing in *Praise of Folly*, where a number of references to actors can be found:

Now, what else is the whole life of man but a sort of play? Actors come on wearing their different masks and all play their parts until the producer orders them off the stage, and he can often tell the same man to appear in different costume, so that now he plays a king in purple and now a humble slave in rags. It's all a sort of pretence, but it's the only way to act out this farce.<sup>20</sup>

Thomas More's reflection on this same theme is described by Alistair Fox as 'the very keystone of More's subsequent philosophy and *modus vivendi*'.<sup>21</sup> While in his twenties, he wrote *Nine Pageants*, which related to the stages of man's life, and implicit in which is More's understanding of life as theatre.<sup>22</sup> Some years later, in his *History of King Richard III*, written between 1513 and 1522, More revisited Lucian's metaphor of life as a play:

If thou sholdest perceue that one wer earnestly proud of the wearing of a gay golden gown, while the lord playth the lord in a stage playe, woldest thou not laugh at his folly, considering that though art very sure, that whan the play is done, he shal go walke a knaue in his old cote? Now though thinkest thy selfe wyse ynough while thou art proude in thy players garment, and forgettest that whan thy play is done, thou shalt go forth as pore as he.<sup>23</sup>

There are several elements here to which I will return.

Although not a specifically theatrical reference, the conflation of fiction and reality is also employed in More's *Utopia*, where the author fictionalises himself as a character within his own work. As Greenblatt points out:

More's acute sense in his life of being 'More', a made-up figure played as on a stage, is manifested directly in his becoming just that: Morus, a character in an imaginary dialogue. And in a process of quite extraordinary self-consciousness and irony, Morus and Hythlodæus discuss precisely this process of fictionalization.<sup>24</sup>

The discussion between these characters relates to the question of state service, which is relevant here in the context of the family portrait.



4 *The Family of Sir Thomas More* by Rowland Lockey (1560–1616), 1592, after Hans Holbein. Oil and tempera on canvas. Nostell Priory, Yorkshire. National Trust Images

5 *The Court of Gonzaga*, Andrea Mantegna (c1431–1506), 1465–74. Walnut oil on plaster, 805 x 807 cm. Camera degli Sposi, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua. Su Concessione del Ministro dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e Del Turismo – Complesso Museale Palazzo Ducale di Mantova

6 Grimani Breviary, 'April' by Gerard Horenbout (?) (c1465–1541), 1490–1510. Illumination on parchment, 28 x 21.5 cm. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice. Su Concessione del Ministro dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e Del Turismo – Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana

I would suggest that these shared interests in both dramatic production and the concept of the world as a stage contribute in a number of ways to how the portrait of *The Family of Sir Thomas More* might be interpreted. In terms of composition, it has been suggested that this picture draws on the tradition of the *sacra conversazione*, with More represented at the centre of a kind of *conversazione profana*.<sup>25</sup> However, it might equally be seen as a *tableau vivant* of the kind found in pageantry and court entertainment. The presence of the family in a domestic setting does not preclude this kind of association: many dramatic performances of this period took place in the Tudor great hall with players using the floor of the hall as their stage and the screen for exits and entries.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the use of the Tudor great hall was one of the ways in which the distinction between the world of drama and the 'real world' might be blurred, as Greg Walker explains:

The workplace of playwrights [such as Heywood] was a *theatrum mundi* indeed, coterminous with the world they inhabited in their extra-dramatic lives as courtiers, scholars, and politicians. Their drama lived in the spaces in which the real events which they allegorised also took place, and it drew rhetorical and symbolic strength from that fact.<sup>27</sup>

More specifically, the space was often used symbolically, as in John Heywood's *The Play of the Weather*, where the relative status of the characters was represented in part by their placing within, or degree of access to, parts of the playing space.<sup>28</sup> In Lockey's version of *The Family of Sir Thomas More* this perhaps can be seen in the placing of both More's secretary, John Harris, and his servant outside the space occupied by the family members.

We find a more overt theatrical link in the position and apparent role of Henry Patenson, More's 'fool' and a member of his household. As the only figure depicted looking out at the viewer, Patenson might be understood to represent a choric figure or expositor. In a dramatic context, such a figure would be responsible for providing a commentary on the action and highlighting the significance of particular events,<sup>29</sup> and might also serve as a dramatic device, being the character responsible for generating the plot, and often played by the writer of the play.<sup>30</sup> The 'fool' as choric figure here must surely also be seen as a direct reference to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, where Dame Folly herself addresses the reader in a parody of classical rhetoric.<sup>31</sup>

Michael Baxandall has explored the relationship between choric figures in dramatic performance and the inclusion of similar figures in works of art, emphasizing the role of both as mediators between viewer and the action depicted.<sup>32</sup> In stressing the impact of such figures on the viewer's engagement with a work of art, he explains: 'We alternate between our own frontal view of the action and the personal relationship with the [choric figures], so that we have a compound experience of the event: the clarity of one kind of access is enriched by the intimacy of the other.'<sup>33</sup> The role of Patenson here is crucial, I would suggest, in negotiating the transition between the 'naturalistic' family portrait – the frontal view, and the allegorical image – which is mediated through Patenson as choric figure. It is through him that we are led to explore the significance of the various components which make up the composition, and the connections between them.



The role of Henry Patenson here as choric figure clearly serves as a parallel to Erasmus' Dame Folly, but the use of the fool in such a role may have visual as well as literary precedents. It has been suggested that *The Family of Sir Thomas More* might have been modelled on Mantegna's *The Court of Gonzaga* in Mantua (Pl 5), although whether Holbein ever saw this work is unclear.<sup>34</sup> In the Gonzaga portrait, a dwarf, who would have been a court entertainer, meets the gaze of the viewer in a similarly direct way to Patenson in Holbein's work. A further resemblance might be seen to the fool, placed behind a pair of seated women, in 'April' in the Grimani Breviary (Pl 6). With fool's tonsure and bauble, and dressed in parti-colour, he is also the only figure to meet the viewer's eye.<sup>35</sup> The months from the Grimani Breviary were possibly produced by Gerard Horenbout,<sup>36</sup> and Holbein may have come across a version of this composition through his contact with the Horenbout family, several of whom were artists at Henry VIII's court.<sup>37</sup>

The key role played by Henry Patenson in this portrait is reinforced by the way in which his costume relates to the





colours used throughout the composition. Patenson is wearing yellow, red and green, which, as Smith reminds us, are the colours associated with the fool in medieval and early modern art, and it is these colours that dominate the whole painting and which are reproduced in the costumes of the principal figures in a highly artificial way.<sup>38</sup> Matching costumes of this kind would have featured in pageantry, and thus their usage here would seem to reinforce the theatrical aspects of this portrait. But this use of a common set of colours also parallels the way livery might be worn by retainers in a household.<sup>39</sup> Since the colours used in the Nostell Priory painting are the colours of the fool, the More family might be understood as being 'Folly's retainers'. The wearing of the gold coat by Patenson also reminds us of More's reference in *The Life of Richard III* to a player proudly wearing 'a gay golden gown'. As discussed earlier, the references to the metaphor of life as a play in Lucian's *Menippus* and in the writings of Erasmus and More all focus on costume as a key component in the assigning of roles, whether this is by Fortune (in *Menippus*) or the play's producer (in Erasmus). In each case the player's role is determined by the allocated costume at any particular stage of the play/life. Patenson's gold gown is clearly inconsistent with his status, but both Thomas More and his father are dressed in clothes that reflect their roles in public life. Sir John More is wearing his robes of office as Judge of the King's Bench,<sup>40</sup> and his son is wearing the chain of office and gown appropriate to his court position. Both of course are entirely inappropriate in a domestic setting, but portraits of this period were highly constructed compositions, and the specific choice of costume would be used to represent the sitter's status. Here, though, the clothing should be seen both on a literal level, to indicate the positions held by both men, but also in the Lucianic sense, whereby More and his father are donning the clothes distributed by Fortune and are playing their allocated roles for the time being before the clothes are redistributed to other players. Furthermore, More's decision to be depicted with his gold chain of office should be seen in the light of his comments in *Utopia*, where he suggests that those who committed serious crimes should be forced to wear gold jewellery and gold fetters, since jewels should be viewed as 'worthless toys'.<sup>41</sup>



The adoption of a role through the appropriation of costume should also be seen in the context of the maskings and disguises that formed an important part of the entertainment at Henry VIII's court, and which were, as Peter Happé explains, often used as an exploration of identity.<sup>42</sup> But even 'normal' dress allowed the blurring of the distinction between men and players. This is illuminated by a passage in Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres* of 1497, in which the character A says:

There is so much nice array  
Among these gallants nowadays  
That a man shall not lightly  
Know a player from another man!(lines 53–56)<sup>43</sup>

It has been suggested that Thomas More himself played character B, to whom this remark was made,<sup>44</sup> and, if this were the case, it would make the exchange particularly pertinent to the exploration of costume in his later family portrait.

The discussion so far has focused on how costume has been used in *The Family of Sir Thomas More* to highlight the theatrical aspects of the portrait as a whole, and specifically to

7 Detail of painting in Pl 4

8 *Christina of Denmark, Duchess of Milan* by Hans Holbein, 1538.  
Oil on oak, 179 x 83 cm. National Gallery, London

9 *Portrait of Joris Vezeleer* by Joos van Cleve (c1485–c1541), 1518.  
Oil on panel, 58 x 40 cm. National Art Gallery, Washington

evoke the Lucianic concept of life as a play. It is against this background that I will now consider a specific item of costume, the glove that Elizabeth Dauncey is in the process of either pulling on or taking off (Pl 2, Pl 7). Smith suggests that her gesture is to be interpreted as her having just arrived, although later in his article he refers to 'the transitory pose of Elizabeth Dauncey, who actually might as easily be leaving as arriving'.<sup>45</sup> His interpretation of the gesture is curiously literal, considering his reading of many other elements, and does not seem to fit comfortably within his overall analysis of the portrait. Christiane Hertel writes about the glove gesture in a similarly literal way: in relation to Holbein's drawing, she remarks of Elizabeth Dauncey that, 'having entered from the left with a book to share, she is about to take off her gloves and settle in', whereas in Lockey's Nostell Priory version, 'Elizabeth, now the second figure on the left, is pulling her gloves on, as if about to leave, in comic contrast to the woman next to her looking for a passage in her book'.<sup>46</sup> It is worth noting that in the individual preparatory sketch of More's second daughter (Pl 3) she is depicted twisted round at a similar angle to that in the group portrait, suggesting that at this stage of the planning process it had already been decided that she would be engaged in removing her glove.<sup>47</sup> A woman removing a glove can, of course, be understood simply on a naturalistic level, but there is good reason why we should seek an alternative explanation, more in keeping both with the overall complexity of this particular family portrait, and with the constructed nature of portraiture in general at this period. It is perhaps significant that, although gloves feature repeatedly in his portraits of men, there is only one other portrait by Holbein of a woman with gloves, that of Christina of Denmark of 1538 (Pl 8). Furthermore, it appears, at least in Lockey's version, that Elizabeth Dauncey has only one glove, making a symbolic explanation more plausible than a functional one (Pl 7).<sup>48</sup>

The specific action of pulling on or taking off a glove is very rarely found in portraits of this period. The only other portraits of women engaged in doing so that I have found date from more than a century after Holbein's *The Family of Sir Thomas More*. There are several such portraits of men from the early part of the 16th century. For example, in Palma il Vecchio's *Portrait of a Man* of 1512–15 (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg) the sitter has a glove half on; in two portraits by Joos van Cleve from c1518–20 the sitter is pulling on a glove (see Pl 9); and in several portraits by Jan Mostaert sitters are depicted with a glove covering only half the hand.<sup>49</sup> I have argued elsewhere that the meaning of this gesture seems to vary from one portrait to another and is often unclear, especially where the identity of the sitter or the circumstances of the commissioning of the portrait are unknown. I do not think, though, that in any of these cases the gesture should be understood simply in a naturalistic sense, as a straightforward removal of an item of clothing.<sup>50</sup>

And so how might Elizabeth Dauncey's gesture of pulling on or taking off a glove be interpreted? Since many of the costumes in which the family members are depicted seem to have a theatrical quality, especially in Lockey's painted version, it is worth exploring whether there could similarly be a theatrical explanation for the glove gesture. There are a number of ways in which we might pursue this possibility. For example, were gloves worn on stage, or in other forms of dramatic entertainment, to the extent to which the presence of gloves here would have provided a direct allusion to players and actors? Were gloves used by actors simply to indicate that they were in part, perhaps, or as an element of their costume in drama or pageantry? It is a surprisingly difficult question to answer.



Although the numbers of images of dramatic productions are limited, and gloves are often difficult to detect in monochrome drawings or prints, I have found little visual evidence that would directly support this view. In the Grimani Breviary ('November') torchbearers are depicted with matching costumes and are clearly wearing gloves, and in an early 14th-century manuscript, a group of dancers can be seen brandishing gloves,<sup>51</sup> but I have found nothing similar in relation to actors. Despite the lack of visual evidence, however, records of early English drama contain many references to gloves, which are listed repeatedly in the accounts. Gloves are described as being purchased either for specific characters or more generally for 'the players'.<sup>52</sup> It is unclear, though, whether the gloves were purchased with a view to the players wearing them on stage, or as part of their wages. In addressing this question, a possible clue might be where the gloves are found within the accounts. Sometimes they are listed with points, or other items of costume, and sometimes with wages. Alternatively, a reference to colour might favour an indication of costume. In 1505 in Coventry, for example, both white and red gloves were ordered.<sup>53</sup> Scholars working in the field of theatre and costume are inconclusive on the topic. The costume historian Maria Hayward seems to take the view that they formed part of the costume and she refers, for example, to purchases made for plays performed at Ashburton, Devon, for new wigs and gloves in 1536–8, and rattle bags, devils' heads and gloves in 1540–6.<sup>54</sup> Jean MacIntyre's account of theatrical costume covers a slightly later period. She refers to the considerable number of gloves bought for the players, although she notes that gloves did not figure very often in public performances during the Elizabethan period.<sup>55</sup> It is possible that gloves were worn for specific moments by certain characters. For example, John Wesley Harris suggests that Christ donned golden mask and gloves during the Transfiguration at a production in Valenciennes,<sup>56</sup> but it is unclear whether there was a systematic use of gloves in such circumstances in the drama of this period.

Even if the question of whether gloves were routinely worn on stage remains inconclusive, the specific gesture of putting





on or taking off a glove may allude to a change of costume. Costume changes were an important element of early theatrical practice, and were used to represent a change of character, for example, where one actor was playing two roles, was undergoing a change of moral status, or was in disguise, and they were also used to convey changes of scene and context.<sup>57</sup> It would have been particularly significant for this to take place in public view. As Peter Happé remarks, 'there is no doubt that to change costume is an important device of didactic theatre, but to have the change occur before the eyes of the audience is doubly powerful: dressing and undressing are intensely theatrical events'.<sup>58</sup> In the context of the More family portrait, it is clear that gloves are one of the few items of costume which might be removed or donned, retaining the naturalistic qualities of the portrait whilst providing a theatrical reference to the changes of costumes and roles in the Lucianic sense.

As Philip Butterworth explains in his discussion of casting and doubling in Medieval English theatre, 'It is the wearing of different clothing that both disguises the player and creates the identity of the played *persona*... When the garment is removed, the identity of the player is revealed.'<sup>59</sup> The removal of Dauncey's glove in Holbein's portrait might be interpreted, then, in this context of the doubling of roles, disguise, and the adoption of a *persona*.

As well as gloves being self-evidently items of costume, they also served as theatrical props, at least by the late 16th century; they were flung down as challenges or exchanged as favours, for instance, in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. In the light of the theatrical quality of this portrait, the items depicted in the hands of the individuals – the books, the glove and Patenson's sword – might be interpreted as hand props in some sense. While we see the family portrait in a naturalistic mode, we are likely to interpret these kinds of objects in a relatively conventional way. What could be more normal in portraiture of this period than individuals being portrayed with gloves, books or indeed a sword? But when the perspective shifts, and we see the portrait mediated to us, the viewers, by Patenson, the 'fool', in his role as choric figure, then we are encouraged to read the objects differently. Particularly striking is the fact that it is entirely inappropriate for Patenson to brandish a sword, whereas the more usual attribute of the fool is a bauble. In Holbein's drawing, Patenson is placed at one end of the line of figures, and, at the

other end, Elizabeth Dauncey is depicted with a glove, which, in the Nostell Priory painting, is clearly white. White gloves were associated with the conferring of knighthoods,<sup>60</sup> and so to find a sword and a white glove in the hands of a fool and a woman respectively would be to see an inversion of appropriate behaviour. Although other figures within the portrait hold books, it is perhaps significant that Thomas More and his father are the only figures with nothing in their hands, even though the sword and gloves held by Patenson and Dauncey might have been fitting attributes. Sword and gloves are precisely the attributes we see, for example, in Holbein's *Portrait of Charles de Solier*, 1534–35 (Pl 10). This mismatch of character with attribute points again towards the Lucianic metaphor of players changing roles as the play proceeds.

There may, however, be another dimension to the curious glove gesture; it could constitute the kind of linguistic game playing that was much loved by More and Erasmus. As we have seen, Folly, represented by Patenson, alludes to a pun on More's name. It is possible that Elizabeth Dauncey's gesture might similarly be intended as a pun on Erasmus' name. Erasmus is a Greek word meaning 'beloved',<sup>61</sup> and is somewhat similar to the word χειρισμός (*heirismos*), meaning handling or manipulation, which is related to the Greek word for hand. Elizabeth Dauncey's action of fiddling with her glove (*χειρισμός*) might therefore serve as the counterpart to the 'fool' Patenson (*Moriae*). As we have seen, in Holbein's drawing Dauncey and Patenson draw attention to themselves by the 'inappropriate' attributes they hold, namely, the white glove and sword; a linguistic pun linking the two figures might additionally reinforce their positioning at either end of an axis in compositional terms. The use of words that were evocative but did not correspond precisely with any particular meaning in etymological terms was the kind of strategy used by More in the names he employed in *Utopia*. As James Romm explains:

This is precisely the sort of no-win game More wants his reader to engage in. Having constructed some names out of recognizable elements, so as to suggest a coherent linguistic scheme, More creates others which are partly or wholly undecodable, thereby undermining the assumption that language can convey consistent or unambiguous meanings.<sup>62</sup>

Romm also notes that, in this respect, More was emulating Lucian, who played similar linguistic games in his writings.<sup>63</sup> The similarity of χειρισμός (*heirismos*) to the name Erasmus, is not far removed from More's pun on the name 'Utopia', meaning 'no place' (οὐτοπος), to the word for 'happy place' (εὐτοπος).<sup>64</sup> Eric Nelson, in his article, 'Greek Nonsense in More's "Utopia"', emphasizes that the Greek puns used by More in *Utopia* 'do not simply entertain; they organize'.<sup>65</sup> We might therefore understand that the bracketing of the line of figures compositionally in this drawing by a pair of visual puns, corresponding to the names of More and Erasmus, might not only be a specific allusion to their friendship; rather, it might indicate that the portrait as a whole is to be understood in the wider context of their friendship and their shared interests, especially their love of Lucian.

There may be a further play on words connected with this glove gesture. More's eldest daughter, Margaret Roper, seated in the foreground, is pointing to a passage from Seneca's *Oedipus* (Pl 11). On the left facing page, we find the text:

Were it mine to fashion [fingere] fate at my will, I would trim my sails to gentle winds, lest my yards tremble, bent 'neath a heavy blast a gentle, moderate breeze that does not heel the side would guide my untroubled boat.<sup>66</sup>

The use of the word 'fingere' here, in the context of the fashioning of fate, might create a link to the word χειρισμός (*heirismos*). The latter, which can be translated as handling or manipulation, may be translated into Latin as 'fingere' in some contexts.<sup>67</sup> It would seem, then, that both sisters can be associated with the concept of fashioning or manipulating, quite literally in the case of Elizabeth who is depicted playing with her glove, and through association with text in the case of Margaret. This proposed linguistic connection, and the fact that both sis-

**10** *Portrait of Charles de Solier, Lord of Morette* by Hans Holbein, 1534–35. Oil on oak, 92.5 x 75.4 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, bpk-Bildagentur

**11** Detail of painting in Pl 4

ters are holding works by Seneca, leads us to the broader philosophical issue, which I would suggest underpins the theatrical references, of whether one can fashion one's fate. The inclusion of Seneca's works, *Oedipus* in Margaret's hands and the *Letters* which can be seen under Elizabeth's arm, is discussed by John Guy in the context of the friendship between More and Erasmus, but also that of More's role in the court of Henry VIII.<sup>68</sup> He explains that the passage to which Margaret points addresses Seneca's discussion of a life of 'wisdom and moderation' contrasted with 'the dangers of hubris and ambition', with fate being 'an irrevocable series of causes and effects with which not even the gods can interfere'.<sup>69</sup> A rather different emphasis is offered by Gerard Wegemer, who focuses his discussion of the inclusion of Seneca's works on the theme of happiness in 'this troubled and stormy world'.<sup>70</sup> He notes that there is a similar sailing metaphor in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* which can be seen on the dresser behind: 'In correcting Boethius, Lady Philosophy warns: "If you set up your sails to the wind, you will be carried not where your will desires, but where the gale drives."<sup>71</sup> Taken together, Wegemer suggests, these works present the possibility of a character formed by the power of philosophy and able to withstand the buffeting of fate.<sup>72</sup> The presence of religious symbols in the More family portrait – crosses worn by Dame Alice, Elizabeth Dauncey and Henry Patenson, the rosary beads held or worn by Margaret Giggs and Patenson and those visible in rosary cases in the cupboard on the far left of the composition – seems to inflect the Stoical references, offering a more positive Christian perspective on the vicissitudes of life than that offered by either Seneca or Boethius.<sup>73</sup> These philosophical reflections on fate, and the possibilities for an individual to adapt to the environment in which he finds himself, contribute in an important way to our discussion concerning the Lucianic concept of life as a play. It would be easy to interpret the theatrical metaphor as scholarly banter between More and Erasmus, focusing on the mutability and multiplicity of roles adopted by those in public life, and on the artificiality of life at court. But the references to Seneca's *Oedipus* and to Boethius ensure that these concerns are addressed with greater urgency and gravity. The constraints on a courtier's ability to negotiate his own role is a pressing one, and the metaphor should be seen as referring to the kind of drama and pageantry performed in the court environment and which reflected its politics. This is a point explored by Greenblatt, who emphasizes the inherent dangers involved, and he cites More's comment, 'They that sometime step up and play with them, when they cannot play their parts, they disorder the play and do themselves no good.'<sup>74</sup> But as well as the dangers of participation in the politics of the Tudor court, Greenblatt emphasises the profound sense of alienation that resulted from More's capacity to observe himself engaging in the 'fiction' of public life. In the context of *Utopia*, Greenblatt stresses the tension between 'intellectual ambition and self-effacement, Christian humanism and realpolitik',<sup>75</sup> and aspects of this portrait seem to articulate exactly these kinds of dilemmas. The inclusion of religious symbols here alongside the books by Seneca and Boethius may suggest a kind of resolution, or at least a possibility for the Christian humanist perspective to provide a counter to the *Realpolitik* of court politics.

It is in this context of performance and the court environment that I will now turn to another element in the portrait, namely the monkey seated beside Dame Alice (Pl 11). It is worth noting that, just as Elizabeth Dauncey and Henry Patenson form two ends of the line of figures, at least in Holbein's drawing, the monkey might be seen to form the third point of a compositional triangle, positioned as it is on the far right hand side. I have argued so far that Elizabeth Dauncey's glove gesture, and the 'fool', Patenson, play key roles in the metaphorical inter-



pretation of this portrait, and I will now argue that the monkey plays a similar part. Just as the gesture of removing the glove has often been interpreted in a surprisingly literal manner, the presence of the monkey has similarly not been subjected to the kind of scrutiny one might expect in a portrait of this complexity, and the monkey generally seems to be interpreted simply as the family's pet.<sup>76</sup> But, as with gloves, the range of connotations of monkeys and apes during the early modern period should at the very least raise questions about the presence of the monkey in this family portrait.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, apes appear in the works of both Lucian and Erasmus, in contexts that relate precisely to the kinds of issues we have been discussing here. During the late medieval and early modern period, the ape was often associated with folly.<sup>78</sup> In his study of apes and ape lore, HW Jansen notes that personifications of folly in the guise of 'Dame Folly' were known in French drama before Erasmus created his famous character in *Praise of Folly*,<sup>79</sup> and that there was a longstanding association of apes with court jesters, the former sometimes serving as 'counsellors' to the latter.<sup>80</sup> These connections were also well represented in the visual imagery of the period. Margaret Sullivan, for instance, identifies a range of images of jesters, fools and monkeys depicted together.<sup>81</sup> It is in this context, I would suggest, that we should understand the significance of the monkey in *The Family Portrait of Sir Thomas More*, especially since the monkey and Patenson, More's 'fool', are positioned at two of the three points of the compositional triangle.

It is, however, references to apes in the writings of Lucian and Erasmus which are particularly pertinent to a humanist interpretation of the family portrait. The juxtaposition of the pet monkey with Thomas More, shown with his gold chain of office, is likely to have encouraged viewers from his immediate circle to reflect on commentary in Erasmus' *Adages*. In *Adage* I.vii.11, for instance, Erasmus translates and expands upon a proverb found in Lucian: '*simia simian est, etiamsi aurea gestet insignia*' ('an ape is an ape though clad in gold').<sup>82</sup> Erasmus relates this to Lucian's tale in which an Egyptian king arranges to have a troop of apes taught to dance. The apes learn fast and are soon ready to perform on stage, decked out in scarlet robes and wearing masks. All goes well until a spectator throws a handful of nuts among them, at which point the apes forget the dance they have been taught and scramble for the nuts. In the ensuing chaos, the apes tear off their masks and



gowns and return to being apes.<sup>83</sup> A further reference to apes can be found in Adage I.vii.10, where Erasmus expands on the proverb '*simia in purpura*' ('an ape in purple'):

What could be more ridiculous than an ape dressed in purple clothes? And yet this is a thing we quite often see in a household where they keep apes or monkeys as pets: they dress them up with plenty of finery to look as much like human beings as possible, sometimes even in purple, so as to deceive people who do not look carefully or have seen nothing like it before, in hopes that the monkey will be greeted as though it were a person, or if a man sees through the deception, the joke will be funnier still. How many apes of this kind one can see in princes' courts, whom you will find, if you strip them of their purple, their collars and their jewels, to be no better than any cobbler!<sup>84</sup>

These ideas, explored by Erasmus and deriving from Lucian, resonate with many of the themes already discussed in relation to this portrait: performance and the use of costume, disguise and deception. Furthermore, not only does Erasmus show the apes hiding their true nature behind masks and expensive gowns, he also presents his reader with the realization of the complicity of the viewer. The viewers enjoy the spectacle, knowing precisely what the deception involves, and they know that at any stage one handful of nuts will destroy the illusion entirely. This emphasis on complicity takes us back to ideas explored by Erasmus in *Praise of Folly*: 'If anyone tries to take the masks [*personas*] off the actors when they are playing a scene on the stage and show their true natural faces to the audience, he'll certainly spoil the whole play and deserve to be stoned and thrown out of the theatre for a maniac.'<sup>85</sup> Butterworth emphasizes the importance of this notion: 'Erasmus refers to the fundamental basis of *agreed pretence* and the effective contract entered into by player and spectator'; by pulling off the mask while the players are acting, the 'madman' not only spoils the play, but 'breaks the player/spectator contract'.<sup>86</sup>

This notion resonates with Greenblatt's discussion of More's awareness of the 'fiction' of Tudor public life. He says of More's world that it is one in which 'everyone is profoundly committed to upholding conventions in which no one believes; somehow belief has ceased to be necessary. The conventions serve no evident human purpose, not even deceit, yet king and bishop cannot live without them. Strip off the layer of theatrical delusion and you reach nothing at all'.<sup>87</sup> This idea of agreed pretence both in its theatrical sense and in its application to public life is key, I would suggest, to understanding the role of Thomas More's monkey in the family portrait. Just as the spectators of the troop of dancing apes play along with the performance while fully understanding their part in the deception, the viewers of the family portrait would have understood their own role as 'seeing through' the trappings of costume and insignia, to recognize the true nature of the human 'performers'. If we look specifically at the monkey in Locket's version of *The Family Portrait of Sir Thomas More* we can see that it has a chain around its neck and is tethered to a block.<sup>88</sup> Rather curiously, it also appears to be holding its own leash. It is tempting to interpret this in the context of the philosophical debate as to whether an individual can control his own fate, which is presented, as we have seen, in the passage from *Oedipus* in Margaret Roper's book. It may be no coincidence that the monkey is depicted partly covered by her skirt.

As well as being associated with folly, the monkey or ape was also closely related to the idea of mimesis or imitation. In the classical period, the notion of apes as imitators was such that the word *μῑμῶ* and *πίθηκος* and *simia* and *imitator* could be used as synonyms.<sup>89</sup> By the early modern period, according to Janson, this had led to the association of apes and monkeys with the arts, even sometimes being represented as an emblem of painting and sculpture.<sup>90</sup> If we pursue this idea, then we might interpret Patenson, the 'fool', as More (*Morus*), the glove gesture as a pun on the name Erasmus, and the monkey (*μῑμῶ* or *mimus*), placed at the third point of the compositional triangle, as an indirect reference to Holbein. Possible allusions to his own role as creator would not be unique in

Holbein's oeuvre. Matthias Winner, writing about Holbein's *Portrait of Erasmus with a Renaissance Pilaster*, 1523 (Pl 12), notes that Holbein has inscribed on the book next to the vase that 'no one could be the "Mimus" of his portrait of Erasmus – in other words, that no one could imitate it, even if he wished to denigrate it (as "Momus", the god of ridicule)', alluding to a tale recounted by Lucian.<sup>91</sup> An identification of the monkey in the More family portrait with Holbein, in this sense of *mimus*, may hint at Holbein's ability to create a matchless representation of the family members, in a similar way to that proposed in the earlier portrait of Erasmus.

The inclusion of the family's pet monkey has opened up, I would suggest, a range of inventive connections in much the same way as the glove gesture: references to Lucian and Erasmus; linguistic games; and ideas of performance, disguise, artificiality and the complicity of the spectator, all of which should also be understood in the context of the wider theatrical references which are explored in the family portrait. The glove gesture, the monkey, and other details in the composition, may indeed constitute the polysemic elements or groups of elements which are juxtaposed, according to Roskill, in inventive and witty ways for the entertainment of the viewer. I would argue, however, that the various elements additionally address a more serious set of issues and concerns: the artificiality of court life and the notion of role playing; the possibilities and constraints for an individual to adapt these roles, or, to use the language of Seneca, to fashion one's fate; and the challenge of negotiating the political dangers inherent in participation in public life in Henry VIII's court. Furthermore, the notions of 'self-reflexiveness' and 'self-estrangement', which Greenblatt emphasises in the context of More's writings in general as well as in his fictionalisation of himself in *Utopia*,<sup>92</sup> are given a new context in the form of this family portrait, which was life-size and on display in the family home. More and his family would quite literally have watched themselves performing a fictionalised version of themselves, in a visual parallel with the literary devices employed by More elsewhere. This extraordinary range of ideas and inventive possibilities are, as we have seen, deeply embedded in the friendship and dialogue between More and Erasmus, and have been translated by Holbein into a truly innovative family portrait.

I am grateful to Beth Williamson and Pamela King for their helpful suggestions at an earlier stage of this research and to Alexandra Hoare.

- 1 Oskar Bätschmann and Pascal Griener, *Hans Holbein*, London, 1997, pp160–4.
- 2 David R Smith, 'Portrait and Counter-Portrait in Holbein's "The Family of Sir Thomas More"', *Art Bulletin*, 87 (2005), p484. Smith is summarising the views of several scholars, for example, John Rowlands and Stephanie Buck. In contrast, Susan Foister notes that 'one can be sure that what is seen in this sketch is not what Holbein ever saw. Rather than acting as a photographer might, stepping in to arrange the groups, a skirt or hand here or there, he was able to rearrange his own sketches of each of the individuals depicted here': Susan Foister, *Holbein and England*, New Haven and London 2004, p249.
- 3 Smith, pp484–506.
- 4 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago, 1980 and 2005, pp11–73.
- 5 Mark Roskill, introduction to *Hans Holbein: Paintings, Prints, and Reception*, ed Mark Roskill and John Oliver Hand, Washington 2001, p10.
- 6 The painting was life-size, approximately 275 x 360 cm, and was in glue medium on canvas. See Foister, p14, and Christian Müller, et al., *Hans Holbein the Younger: The Basel Years 1515–1532*, Munich 2006, p370.
- 7 Two further copies exist, one in Chelsea Town Hall and one in Hendred House, Oxfordshire, discussed in Lesley Lewis, *The Thomas More Family Group Portraits after Holbein*, Leominster 1998. I am grateful to a reviewer for this reference.
- 8 Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries*, New Haven and London 1990, pp142–3. Paul Ganz suggests that the Nostell Priory copy might have been commissioned for Margaret Roper's branch of the family, since it was at Well Hall in Kent, the seat of the Roper family, before it moved to Nostell Priory: Paul Ganz, *The Paintings of Hans Holbein*, London, 1950 and 1956, p280.
- 9 For a discussion of this point, see Campbell, pp142–5, and Smith, pp491–2. Müller notes that the change of Elizabeth Dauncey and Margaret Giggs was not marked up on Holbein's drawing, and suggests therefore that this must have been Locket's decision, probably on the basis of dynastic considerations, pp373–4.
- 10 Smith, p484.

- 11 This is discussed by Campbell, p165, and Smith, p488.
- 12 Bättschmann and Griener, pp155–6.
- 13 Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans Betty Radice, with an introduction by AHT Levi, London 1971. Levi suggests that the work's structure as an encomium in the style of Lucian was an allusion to the earlier collaboration between More and Erasmus in translating Lucian, p7.
- 14 Smith, p488.
- 15 Andreas Beyer, 'The London Interlude 1526–1528', in Müller, p66.
- 16 Thomas Betteridge, *Writing Faith and Telling Tales: Literature, Politics and Religion in the Work of Thomas More*, Notre Dame, Indiana 2013, pp2–3.
- 17 AW Reed, *Early Tudor Drama: Medwall, the Rastells, Heywood, and the More Circle*, London 1926, p5.
- 18 RW Chambers, *Thomas More*, London 1935 and 1963, p33, and *Tudor Interludes: The Plays of John Heywood*, ed Richard Axton and Peter Happé, Cambridge 1991, p26.
- 19 Reproduced in Alistair Fox, *Thomas More*, Oxford 1982, p43. Glynne Wickham notes that St Augustine also used the concept of the 'world as a theatre in which mortal men act out their brief lives with God, His angels, and the Saints and Martyrs as the audience': *English Moral Interludes*, ed Glynne Wickham, London 1976, p vi.
- 20 Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, p104.
- 21 Fox, p37.
- 22 Fox, p13.
- 23 Reproduced in Fox, pp100–1.
- 24 Greenblatt, p34
- 25 Beyer, p68.
- 26 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642*, Cambridge 2009, p34.
- 27 Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama*, Cambridge 1998, p1.
- 28 For further discussion of the use of the playing space see Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII*, Cambridge 1991, p137, and Pamela M King, 'John Heywood, *The Play of the Weather*' in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker, Oxford 2012, pp208–10.
- 29 Greg Walker, 'The Cultural Work of Early Drama' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed Richard Beadle and Alan J Fletcher, Cambridge 1994 and 2008, p79.
- 30 King, p214.
- 31 Levi, introduction to Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, p12.
- 32 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford 1988 (first published 1972), p72.
- 33 Baxandall, p76.
- 34 Smith, p484.
- 35 The use of parti-colour, which features strong blocks of contrasting colour, is discussed in relation to jesters, entertainers and other social groups by Ruth Mellinkoff in *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1993, pp5–16.
- 36 Giorgio E Ferrari, Mario Salmi and Gian Lorenzo Mellini, *The Grimani Breviary*, London, 1972, p29.
- 37 Foister, p16.
- 38 Smith, p493.
- 39 Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, Cambridge 2000, pp17–18.
- 40 Smith, p487.
- 41 Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*. London, 1986, p64. The use of gold chains as punishment is also discussed in Greenblatt, p49.
- 42 Peter Happé, 'Dramatic Genre and the Court of Henry VIII', in *Henry VIII and the Court: Art Politics and Performance*, ed Thomas Betteridge and Suzannah Lipscomb, Farnham 2013, p274.
- 43 Henry Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucres*, in *English Moral Interludes*, ed Glynne Wickham, London 1976, p42.
- 44 Pamela King, personal communication.
- 45 Smith, pp484, 487.
- 46 Christiane Hertel, 'Engaging Negation in Hans Holbein the Younger's *Portrait of Christina of Denmark, Duchess of Milan*', in *Women and Portraits in Early Modern Europe: Gender, Agency, Identity*, ed Andrea Pearson, Aldershot 2008, p120.
- 47 Müller, p374.
- 48 It is difficult to see in the drawing whether there is one glove or two. The significance of the unpaired glove is explored in Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe', *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (2001), pp119–32.
- 49 There are several portraits of men pulling on a glove from the seventeenth century, most notably, Rembrandt's *Portrait of Jan Six*, 1654.
- 50 Catherine Hunt, PhD thesis, 2012.
- 51 Clifford Davidson, *Illustrations of the Stage and Acting in England to 1580*, Kalamazoo, Michigan 1991, p95.
- 52 RW Ingram, ed, *Records of Early English Drama: Coventry*, Toronto, Buffalo, London 1981, p194.
- 53 Ingram, p100.
- 54 Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: Clothing and the Law in Henry VIII's England*, Farnham 2009, p296.
- 55 Jean MacIntyre, *Costumes and Scripts in the Elizabethan Theatres*, Alberta 1992, p61.
- 56 John Wesley Harris, *Medieval Theatre in Context: An Introduction*, London 1992, p141.
- 57 Susan Baker, 'Personating Persons: Rethinking Shakespearean Disguises', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 43 (1992), p305.
- 58 Peter Happé, 'Properties and Costumes in the Plays of John Bale', *Medieval English Theatre*, 2:2 (1980), pp59–60.
- 59 Philip Butterworth, *Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre*, Cambridge 2014, p47.
- 60 See, for example, James William Norton-Kyshe, *The Law and Customs relating to Gloves*, London 1901, p51.
- 61 The meanings and associations of both 'Erasmus' and 'Desiderius' are discussed by Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle in 'The Eponyms of "Desiderius Erasmus"', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 30 (1977), pp12–23. She notes that, as a student, he had signed himself Herasmus and later, when dropping the 'H', had regretted not adopting the name 'Erasmus' (12). He then added a further name, Desiderius, also meaning 'beloved' when in his thirties. This inventiveness, Boyle suggests, characterises an author 'who invested the act of naming with gravity and wit' (p12).
- 62 James Romm, 'More's Strategy of Naming in the *Utopia*', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 22 (1991), p173.
- 63 Romm, p173.
- 64 Eric Nelson, 'Greek Nonsense in More's "Utopia"', *Historical Journal*, 44 (2001), pp890–1.
- 65 Nelson, p890.
- 66 Cited in Gerard B Wegemer, *Young Thomas More and the Arts of Liberty*, Cambridge, 2011, p160. On the right we can see: 'The lad, while mad, sought the stars, trusting in new arts, and strove to vanquish true birds in flight, demanding too much of his false wings.'
- 67 I am grateful to Robert Fowler for his advice on this point.
- 68 John Guy, 'Thomas More and Tyranny', *Moreana*, 49:189–90 (2012), p170.
- 69 Guy, pp174–5.
- 70 Wegemer, p168.
- 71 Wegemer, pp170–1.
- 72 Wegemer, p174.
- 73 Wegemer, p172. It is tempting to see the rosary beads just visible in the cupboard on the far left as anticipating the crucifix in the top left corner of Holbein's *Ambassadors* of 1533, since both appear to be partially hidden.
- 74 Greenblatt, p30, citing More's *History of Richard III*.
- 75 Greenblatt, pp56–57.
- 76 The pet monkey is mentioned, for example, by Foister, p233, and Bättschmann and Griener, p164.
- 77 There is a portrait miniature of Catherine of Aragon by Lucas Horenbout (c1515–16), in which the sitter holds a pet monkey. In a later copy (early 1530s) the monkey refuses to accept a coin and instead reaches for Catherine's crucifix in a show of piety. It has been suggested that this had political connotations in the years prior to the divorce, in that Catherine was refusing to be bought off by the king, and was sticking to what she considered to be her Christian duty. In this context it has been proposed that the inclusion of a marmoset might have referred to Thomas More, one of her committed supporters, since the word marmoset is close to an anagram of his name. See Philip Mould Ltd <http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Item&ItemID=32&Desc=Queen-Catherine-of-Aragon-|—English-School> (accessed 2/7/2015) and Christie's <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/english-school-16th-century-portrait-of-katherine-5521209-details.aspx#top> (accessed 2/7/2015). I am grateful to Nasim Tadghighi for pointing out this reference.
- 78 Margaret Sullivan, 'Peter Bruegel the Elder's Two Monkeys: A New Interpretation', *Art Bulletin*, 63 (1981), pp117–18.
- 79 HW Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, London, 1952, p206.
- 80 Janson, p211.
- 81 Sullivan, pp117–18.
- 82 Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Adages Ivi1 to Ix100*, translated and annotated by RAB Mynors, Toronto, 1989, p72.
- 83 The original story can be found in Lucian's tale *The Fisherman*, and is discussed by Janson (p155) and by Sullivan (p125). Michel Weemans discusses the story as a moral exemplum in a specifically Christian context, in his article, 'Herri met de Bles's Sleeping Peddler: An Exegetical and Anthropomorphic Landscape', *Art Bulletin*, 88 (2006), p461.
- 84 Erasmus, *Adages*, I.vii.10. Kenneth Gouwens, in 'Apes of Cicero', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 71 (2010), pp523–45, remarks on the transition from the 1508 edition to the 1515 edition, arguing that Erasmus 'augments the prominence of the intention to deceive' (pp540–1).
- 85 Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, p104.
- 86 Butterworth, pp46–7.
- 87 Greenblatt, p14.
- 88 Janson discusses the fettered ape at length, suggesting that during the medieval period it tended to refer to the ape's refusal to submit to discipline, being instead chained to vice and sin (pp146–57). It is unlikely to have this meaning here.
- 89 Janson, p287. Such a usage can be found, for example, in Seneca, *Controversiae* IX, 3, 12: Janson, footnote, p287.
- 90 Janson, p287.
- 91 Matthias Winner, 'Holbein's *Portrait of Erasmus with a Renaissance Pi-laster*' in Roskill and Hand, pp164–5.
- 92 Greenblatt, pp31, 34.